M. Hill

Warm Springs--From Beyond Our Days

The Epic of a Famous Georgia Village

Warm Springs -- From Beyond Our Days

West Georgia Press
Warm Springs, Georgia

Warm Springs -- From Beyond Our Days

The Epic of a Famous Georgia Village

Printed In U. S. A.

Plodding tirelessly forward without resting, a trio of bronze-skinned humans frequently flashed uneasy glances at the fourth member of their party who was lying in a coma upon an improvised stretcher of woven vines and strips of tree bark.

Still wearing a somewhat depleted coating of warpaint, these Creek Indians were returning from battle with one of their wounded brothers. These braves were hastening to transport the disabled member by their slow but easy stage to a small mountain range north of their great Chattahoochee River.

Once they arrived at this sacred location, they knew a spring of water bursting forth in a lavish, crystal sluice from the hill in an exact and warm temperature. When they arrived at this wonder they would follow the enchanted directions their Medicine Man had given them.

The Medicine Man advised the Creeks to bring their injured companion—wounded almost fatally—to these springs and treat his injury by immersing him in the soft, warm mud.

The Creeks believed that the superior healing qualities of the springs were due to the kindness of

the Great Spirit, who, they thought, obligingly stoked the fires in the depths of the earth so that the wounded warriors could lie for hours in the mysterious warm mud and water to live to fight again.

Thus, according to legend, Warm Springs has been a health restoring centre From Beyond Our Days to the Present. Warm Springs was a health resort when America was still a wilderness. Today Warm Springs is recognized as the hydrotheraputic center of the world.

Nestled among towering pines in western Georgia in Meriwether County, this famed village, the vacation retreat of Franklin D. Roosevelt, is twelve hundred feet above the sea level. The population is about five hundred with an average of one hundred patients at the Georgia Warm Springs Foundation, hospital for the treatment of the after effects of infantile paralysis (poliomyelitis).

The first record of white occupation of Warm Springs dates from the latter part of the 1700's when coastal Savannah, then the most important city in the State, was swept by one of the many yellow fever epidemics. At the time yellow fever was supposed to be caused by a "poisonous miasma" which seeped insidiously out of the sea coast mud

and left death in its wake.

Citizens of Savannah, it is reported, were accustomed to flee to higher ground whenever they were threatened by such a scourge and began to turn to Warm Springs, across the State, with its healthy altitude and dry, clean pinelands.

By 1832 Warm Springs was a recognized summer resort. When the initial proprietor settled at the springs in December, 1832, he found only a few cabins. Later a hotel was built and a small village assumed shape. There was a general store which sold everything from plow shares to paregoric and calico. Soon twice-a-week mail service was inaugarated.

Records indicate that the first two bath houses were built a few feet below the largest spring. The baths were ten by twelve and four by twelve feet.

At the present there two pools at Warm Springs, one for patients and one for the general public. The patients' pool is glass enclosed for year around bathing.

In 1845 the property was purchased by Robert Seymore Bonner. He was evidently a poor manager for debts accumulated and in November, 1848, the sheriff of Meriwether County sold it to Col.

John L. Mustian. Mr. Mustian constructed around the hotel a number of cottages which were eagerly sought after by vacationists. It was at this time that the first artificial pools were constructed. Stage coaches were plying regularly between Warm Springs and connecting points.

But in the fall of 1869 the old hotel, together with the cottages, burned down after catching fire from burning leaves. Prior to this, however, Sherman's march in 1865 cut short the flourishing tourist trade. True Sherman did not pass through Warm Springs itself although he did visit Greenville, ten miles away. But his scouts and "bummers" who always cut a swarth of destruction some ten or fifteen miles on either side of his main army, swarmed into Warm Springs and threatened to burn the hotel and other buildings. It so happened that a Briton, T. F. Tidmarsh, was in charge at the hotel. He met the soldiers at the door, informed them that he, a subject of the King of England, owned the structures and forbade them do any damage. The buildings escaped.

Upon the death of Mr. Mustian, a relative, Charles L. Davis, became owner of the Warm Springs property. With the aid of sixty citizens of

Columbus, Ga., Mr. Davis built the historic Meriwether Inn. This hotel was a rambling, cavernous structure with elaborate ginger bread carving and gables. It was torn down in 1934 to make way for one of the new halls of the present Warm Springs Foundation. It was at the Meriwether Inn where society gathered in the "elegant 80's and the gay 90's."

Finally the property passed into the hands of George Foster Peabody who operated a summer resort at the springs. One of the group of cottages was owned by the Joseph family, of Columbus. A nephew of this family, Louis Joseph, had been stricken with infantile paralysis while in Santo Domingo. Mr. Joseph came to Warm Springs an invalid, but at the end of the third summer he was able to walk to and from the baths; the only help he required was assistance in and out of the water.

Meanwhile, in August, 1920, a one Franklin D. Roosevelt spent most of a night fighting a forest fire while on a vacation in New England. The next morning he awoke to find that his left leg did not swing with the usual vigor. Two days later his whole body from his hips down was paralyzed. Infantile paralysis, the doctor announced.

Two years later after no improvement, Mr. Roosevelt heard of the miraculous water at a little mountain-side spring down in the deep South at a little place then called Bullochville. Deeply impressed Mr. Roosevelt came to Warm Springs in the fall of 1924. After bathing in the springs and massaging and manipulating sick muscles under the warm water, he noticed remarkable improvement.

Then Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Peabody, with the cooperation of Thomas Loyless, who had been manager of the hotel under Mr. Peabody, launched a drive in 1926 to make Warm Springs a national center for the treatment of the after-effects of infantile paralysis.

All the world knows the rest of the story, of the courage and tenacity of purpose displayed by Mr. Roosevelt in this, one of the bitterest humanitarian fights ever waged.

The village of Warm Springs is a half mile from the springs and Foundation. With a yearly rainfall of 48 inches the locality has an average temperature of 64 degrees.

Warm Springs has churches, schools, electric lights, waterworks, hotels, furnished rooms, apart-

ments; also telegraph, local and long distance telephones, a newspaper and other enterprises.

Located on the main line of the Southern railway from Washington to Columbus, Warm Springs is also served by the Birmingham, Ala., branch of the A. B. & C. railway. Buses ply the local paved roads between Atlanta and Columbus. A small airport is situated nearby.

The Foundation offers treatment only for the after-effects of infantile paralysis and does not concern itself directly with research work, other than through interest. The primary concern at the Foundation is the treatment and rehabilitation of the patients.

Persons interested in treatment at the Warm Springs Foundation should write to Fred Botts, Registrar, Georgia Warm Springs Foundation, Warm Springs, Georgia.

The buildings of the Foundation include Georgia Hall, the administration building, (a gift from generous Georgians), which houses the executive offices, a dining room and rooms for guests and patients; a number of patients dormitory buildings; Foundation cottages for patients and their families; and private owned cottages. Patients

who prefer may live off the Foundation grounds and reside with private families in and near the town of Warm Springs.

In addition to those buildings, there is a brace shop at the Foundation that is equipped to make necessary medical appliances for patients. An Infirmary and the Medical Building provide for facilities for surgical operations.

The Foundation also has a playhouse where moving pictures are shown tri-weekly; also a museum where relics of this section are housed, and which contains innumerable gifts of every conceivable description sent to Mr. Roosevelt, which he has placed in this collection.

The Foundation operates its own water system, which pipes the spring water to a resevoir on the side of the mountain at a sufficient elevation to insure adequate water pressure. This water is piped into all the Foundation buildings and is used for all domestic purposes. The Foundation maintains its own fire department, which is well drilled and equipped, winning the admiration of the fire underwriters.

In fact, the Foundation may well be likened unto a city of itself, offering almost every advan-

tage from such sports as golf, tennis, horseback riding, to the more serious aspects of its purposes.

Social relations between the Foundation and the town of Warm Springs are similar to that of one subdivision to another in a large city. The towns-people have social events to which the Foundation patients and staff are invited, and likewise the Foundation invites the townspeople to take part in its social activities.

While in this short brochure no attempt has been made to describe in detail the working of the Foundation, a word should be said about the spirit that prevails. Where one might expect to find gloom and depression, only cheerfulness and optimism prevail. The atmosphere of the usual medical hospital is distinctly lacking, and in its place there exists a spirit of comradeship and helpfulness.

As to climate conditions, the weather is mild in winter, with little snow or ice. In summer, the altitude warrants a lack of torrid atmosphere. Summer evenings are always cool, and sleeping under blankets is not unusual. Pine Mountain has tonical air, and winter residents are not faced with the debilitating atmosphere often found in resorts.

People are constantly asking about the mystery

of the springs. Especially do they ask: "What makes the water warm?" Dr. Poole Maynard, a geologist explains it as follows:

"Where do these waters come from? What is their original source? What is the chemical composition of these waters? Why are they always warm? When and how are these springs formed? How can we answer these questions. If we know the history of the rocks in which the waters are entombed; if we know the nature of the rocks, and how they are formed, the answers can be determined.

"We find that the Warm Springs has a constant flow of one thousand, eight hundred and nine gallons per minute. We find these waters have a very uniform temperature throughout the year of about 90 degrees Fahrenheit.

"We find that Pine Mountain, at the base of which the Warm Springs waters flow, is made up wholly of what originally was a sandstone, which we now call quartzite, because the sandstone has been compressed and the original sand grains have been crystalized. The quartzite strata, therefore, has been folded, so that along the western border there has been an over-thrust of the quartzite caus-

ing it to fold back towards the east; and the rocks have been broken as the result of an earthquake. The old order of things which had prevailed for so many years in the geologic history of the world was being changed. This great earthquake, which extended for many miles along the western side of Pine Mountain, resulted in the conception of Warm Springs, and there soon began to flow forth the waters of this famous spring.

"There waters are always warm and they must come from great depth, for there are only two ways they could be warmed. One is from pressure of the overlying rocks, so that at considerable depth, probably a mile or more, the waters, could be heated to a temperature even greater than 90 degrees; or, it is possible that they could be heated by rock decomposition at considerable depth due to radio activity.

"We inquire as to the chemical composition of these waters and we find that they are exceedingly pure; that the amount of mineral matter which they carry is very small, but we also know that the waters have been materially changed since their passage through thousands of feet of sandstone, where they have evidently come in contact with

basic igneous rocks, and have absorbed the alkaline mineral which they now contain.

"Reports of the Water Resources Division of the United States Geological Survey shows that the solids in solutions in these waters consist of the carbonates of lime and magnesia and iron, and the sulphates of lime and soda and potash, with some salt accompanying the oxides of silica and alumina."

Changing overnight from a calm village into the nation's No. 2 capital is quite a jump, but for more than a dozen times Warm Springs and its inhabitants have experienced this transition. When President Franklin D. Roosevelt, along with his Washington entourage, comes down to his Georgia retreat, several gigantic changes take place.

The lone constable is replaced by G-men, secret service attaches, state patrolmen, and a detachment of U. S. Marines for special guard duty. A two-wheel cart normally used for hauling mail gives way to trucks. Tourists pour in to swell the population. Activities are speeded up on the 2,365-acre Roosevelt plantation. Patients at the Foundation are overjoyed to have the President of the United States in their midst.

Even the weekly newspaper editor has assistance in telling the world what is happening for a fleet of crack reporters always accompany the President. But busiest among villagers is Mayor W. G. Harry, local farmer and Presbyterian minister. When Mr. Roosevelt is in town, the Mayor finds his official duties increased and at the same time he must care for his farm. Moreover, the mayor-farmer-minister has to prepare a special sermon to preach in the tiny, snow-white Foundation chapel with Mr. Roosevelt in the audience.

Neither pomp nor pageantry greets the nation's Chief Executive when he comes to Warm Springs. Townspeople understand that he comes to their quiet village for rest and they strive to see that his stay is unpreturbed.

Of course all residents are on hand when the President's train puffs into the small railway station. They gather at the depot and mill about long before the arrival is scheduled. The throng strains against the guard ropes when the train comes to to an easy halt. A ramp is quickly fastened to the the rear observation platform. Usually secretaries get off first and then "Squire" Roosevelt steps out to smile and wave at his Georgia neighbors.

After chatting for a moment with intimate Warm Springs and Meriwether County friends, he climbs under the wheel of his own "fliver" which is kept at the Foundation for his use. The highway is cleared of spectators and the President himself drives off to his "Little White House" perched on a cliff-side of Pine Mountain.

The "Little White House is constructed on a two-acre lot thickly dotted with pine and oak trees. The six room structure is modestly built with a garage and servant quarters located nearby. Only the rear of the house is approachable, since the front borders on a high, rocky bluff. Small guard booths are situated around the grounds at fifty foot intervals.

Tourists by the thousands drive from the highways through a mile of tree-shaded lanes to this Georgia White House and view the building from behind a wooden fence and through a barrage of the tall pines. When the President is away a lone guard is stationed in a sentinel booth at the fence, registering the daily stream of sight-seers in a huge guest book subdivided by states and nations.

Mr. Roosevelt usually spends his time in Warm Springs following a routine something like

this: Hours spent basking in a southern sun, frequent dips in the water of the pool he made famous, occasional conferences with dignitaries, several drives to his mountain farm, and a couple of conferences with the press representatives.

Most conspicious among the alterations in the town's normal life is probably the increased law-enforcement staff. Extreme precaution is part of the rules and regulations the Presidential secret service staff are required to carry out. However, Mr. Roosevelt has indicated on several occasions that he would much rather be alone.

It is recalled that while on one Georgia visit, the Chief Executive eluded the authorities and drove from his "White House" to his farm with only his personal body-guard. When he was missed by the secret service agents they became desperate and spent frenzied minutes locating the President.

Increased communication facilities are another factor in accelerating the town's affairs to the speed of those of a metropolis. Telephone and telegraph lines are installed for direct contact with Washington. Even a local airport is improvised for temporary mail planes.

While the President is in Warm Springs for a vacation stay, tourists literally swarm into the town from throughout Georgia and neighboring states. Many of them, however, are sorely disappointed because after hours of waiting around the "Little White House" the anouncement may come that Mr. Roosevelt is staying inside that day. Yet several hundred visitors are usually fortunate enough to get a fleeting glance at the Chief Executive when he is in his adopted Georgia home.

Visiting to some of the tourist attractions in the Warm Springs section is restricted when Mr. Roosevelt is present. Points of interest sometimes closed to the public include Georgia Hall, administration building at the Foundation erected by contributions from Georgians, and the Medical Building, recently completed at a cost of approximately $180,000.

On the other hand, visitors are always permitted to drive up to the "Little White House", to inspect the U. S. Fishery station, to drive through the Roosevelt farm, to view the pools, and also inspect the "magic hills", those weird inclines which possess properties of drawing cars "uphill".

One thing at Warm Springs which holds the attention of visitors for hours is the museum at the Foundation containing many of the gifts presented the President by admirers from all corners of the globe.

Warm Springs is a famous health restoring center. Warm Springs is the adopted Georgia home of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Warm Springs boasts of many tourist attractions. But there is one outstanding thing about Warm Springs which cannot be viewed with the eye. This thing is not a landmark or anything material, it is simply an idea, an idea of unselfishness.

Countless numbers have caught this idea which permeates the place, this idea of unselfishness, which Mr. Roosevelt has so aptly termed "the spirit of Warm Springs"

From Beyond Our Days up through the Twentieth Century that idea has prevailed in this wonderland of Nature.